

# Archived Information

## ENGLISH LANGUAGE ACQUISITION EVALUATION GRANTS

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### **Institute of Education Sciences**

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APPLICATION RECEIPT DATE: April 25, 2003

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### Request for Applications

The Institute of Education Sciences (IES) invites grant applications for evaluation studies on English language acquisition. For this competition, the Institute will consider only applications that meet the requirements outlined below under the section on Requirements of the Proposed Research.

## Purpose of the Evaluation Project

The purpose of the English Language Acquisition Evaluation projects is to implement rigorous evaluation studies, through randomized field trials, of alternative instructional approaches for early elementary students whose first language is Spanish that will result in improving their English proficiency and reading achievement.

This competition will support the development and evaluation of two well-defined and distinctly different instructional approaches, a structured English immersion program and a transitional program, to determine the causal effects of the different approaches on students acquiring English proficiency, and to determine the effectiveness of each approach for which children and under what conditions.

Evaluation projects will be funded through cooperative agreements between IES and eligible entities to conduct the evaluation studies.

## Background

The number of limited English proficient children attending American schools has grown dramatically, primarily because of immigration. According to state-reported data, over 3.9 million children with limited proficiency in English were in elementary and secondary schools in the United States in school year 2000-01. A number of states are experiencing significant increases in the number of students who are English-language learners. For example, in 9 states - Alabama, Georgia, Idaho, Kentucky, Nebraska, Nevada, North Carolina, South Carolina and Tennessee - the English-language learner population tripled between school years 1992-93 and 1999-2000. These children face the difficult challenges of learning to speak, read and write English while learning the content of their academic subjects. Although American schools are experiencing dramatic growth in their numbers, their educational achievement remains low. Findings from *Prospects: The Congressionally Mandated Study of Educational Growth and Opportunity* in 1995 indicate that these students receive lower grades, are judged by their teachers to have lower academic abilities, and score below their classmates on standardized tests of reading and mathematics. Attempts to effectively teach these students to speak, read and write English as well as the content of academic subjects have been hampered by the lack of credible evidence on the best ways to do so.

While some educators support the position that English-language learners spend too much time in native-language instruction, others believe that English-language learners should be taught all academic subjects in their native language for two to three years, and that extensive native language academic instruction is necessary for students to benefit from eventual instruction in English delivered in mainstream classrooms. Critics of this approach argue that it keeps students in a cycle of native language dependency that ultimately inhibits significant progress in English language acquisition. Complicating the debate is the disconnect between the English-language learner programs that schools claim that they are using and what is actually happening in classrooms. Most studies of ELL instruction show wide variation even within given program

types. In addition, approaches do not exist in isolation, coexist even within schools, and are often combined in various ways, depending on the availability of staff and resources.

Although previous studies have attempted to examine the impact of instructional strategies on student learning for English-language learners, the large majority of them have suffered from weak or fatally flawed evaluation designs. It is very difficult to draw conclusions about the effectiveness of different approaches on the basis of the accumulated evidence. Researchers have also noted that no clear consensus exists on the length of time children with limited English proficiency need to become proficient in English. Currently, instructional approaches vary from as little as one year to five or more years.

As school districts and schools are held accountable for the educational achievement of limited English proficient students, the question of when and how to introduce English-language content instruction becomes even more urgent. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 requires States to establish standards and benchmarks for raising the level of English proficiency and academic achievement for limited English proficient students, and requires reading and language arts assessments of children in English for any student who has attended school in the United States (excluding Puerto Rico) for three or more consecutive years. In addition, bilingual education has been the focus of intense policy debates in several states. States such as California, Arizona and Massachusetts have passed measures requiring English-language learners to be placed in English-only classrooms. Colorado recently voted to maintain bilingual education, but is overhauling how English-acquisition programs in the state's elementary and secondary schools are taught by recruiting and training teachers to help immigrant children master English. Given the No Child Left Behind Act's mandate to tie language instruction curricula to scientifically based research and demonstrated effectiveness, there is a critical need for information on effective approaches for helping these students achieve English-proficiency and academic success in school.

There are complimentary initiatives underway that will, when completed, contribute to the current policy debate about effective English education for English-language learners. The National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) and IES are jointly funding several research studies that address the overarching question: How do children whose first language is Spanish learn to read and write in English? A National Literacy Panel on Language Minority Children and Youth, commissioned by IES, is synthesizing the literacy research on education of language minority children and youth. By the end of 2003, the Panel plans to provide IES with research-based recommendations to guide educational practice and inform educational policy.

In summary, because low achievement in English proficiency by English language learners in the early grades has serious consequences for these students in terms of their literacy development and academic achievement, and because the No Child Left Behind Act requires that states and localities use research proven practices in educating all children, it is critically important for the Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation, to support an evaluation that will answer questions that are central to improving the education of English-language learners. Development and evaluation of effective approaches to English-language

acquisition will result in improved English proficiency and academic achievement for students who are English-language learners.

### Requirements of the Proposed Research

The English Language Acquisition Evaluation projects will support evaluation studies that focus on the improvement of English proficiency for students whose primary language is Spanish, in kindergarten through third grade. IES is interested in funding evaluation studies for up to 60 months to develop two well-defined and contrasting approaches to language instruction. The purpose of the evaluation is to assess how these approaches--structured English immersion program and a transitional program, work best for which students at what grade levels, and under what conditions. The overall study questions are:

1. How effective are the structured immersion and transitional programs in developing English proficiency for limited English students whose first language is Spanish?
2. What are the student and teacher characteristics that predict success?

The evaluation should consist of three phases. Phase I is for the development and pilot testing of the two approaches and preparation of sites and study participants. Phase II is for full implementation of the two interventions. Phase III is for evaluation of the impact of the interventions on student outcomes.

Phase I (year one of the project): Development and Pilot Testing of Interventions.

This competition will support the development of two distinct English-language learner programs, a structured English immersion program and a transitional program, for implementation in kindergarten through the third grade. The development of both programs is to be based on well-developed theory of language development. The outcome to be measured is the development of English oracy and literacy by students whose primary language is Spanish, in kindergarten through third grade. There are theoretically-based, high quality curriculum materials available that some schools districts and school currently use that may be modified for the purposes of this evaluation. In addition, the evaluation should consider the use of measures of oracy and literacy for limited English students currently under development. The National Institute of Child Health and Human Development and the Institute of Education Sciences are jointly funding programs of research on the development of English literacy in Spanish-speaking children. The project at the University of Houston, *Oracy/Literacy Development in Spanish-Speaking Children*, is developing such measures.

A structured English immersion program and a transitional program both have the same instructional goal for language-minority students to acquire English language skills so that they can succeed in English-only mainstream classrooms. Students in structured English immersion receive all of their instruction in English, which is taught through the content areas. Therefore, a strong language development component is included in each content lesson. The student's first language is limited to clarifying instructions. Students who enter a structured English immersion program in kindergarten are usually expected to be mainstreamed after first or second grade.

Transitional programs are typically categorized as early-exit or late-exit programs, depending on how rapidly the language of instruction shifts from the student's primary language to English, in language and content instruction. The goal of an early-exit program is to mainstream English-language learners into an English-only classroom by the end of first or second grade. Students in late-exit programs receive a larger percentage of their instructional time in their native language for language arts, reading, and other content areas such as mathematics, social studies and science, and remain in this program for a longer period of time, typically four to six years. The intent of this competition is to develop a modified version of a transitional program for implementation in kindergarten through Grade 3, using the best features of an early-exit and late-exit program. The table that follows depicts suggested distinctions between the two diverse program models, a structured immersion program model and a modified transitional program model, to be developed.

	<b>Structured English Immersion</b>	<b>Transitional</b>
Content Instruction	In English with adjustments to proficiency level so that subject matter is comprehensible. Instruction is supplemented by visual aids and gestures.	Literacy and academic content areas begin in Spanish and continue to grade-level mastery of academic content. As proficiency in oral English develops, the language gradually shifts to English. The transition usually begins with math computation, followed by reading and writing, then science, and finally social studies. Students transition to mainstream classes where all academic instruction is in English once they acquire sufficient English proficiency.
Language Arts Instruction	English is taught through content areas. Subject matter knowledge and English are taught together by teaching content through learner-appropriate English. A strong language development component is included in each content lesson.	Begins in student's primary language with instruction in English oral language development. The goal is to achieve both basic oral English proficiency and content knowledge, mainstreaming to an all-English program by the end of Grade 3.
Language goal	English acquisition and content knowledge by Grade 3.	English acquisition and content knowledge by Grade 3.
How Spanish is used.	Spanish is limited to use on a case-by-case basis, primarily to clarify English instruction.	Spanish is used to ensure grade-level mastery of academic content but only until the student can make a full transition to all-English instruction.
How English is used.	To teach content instruction, adjusted to proficiency level.	Shifts from Spanish to English as proficiency in oral English develops. English is frequently used in non-academic subjects such as art, music and physical education.

Phase I of the evaluation is to include: the development of teacher training materials and curriculum materials; a pilot test of the two interventions, including data collection instruments including assessments, data collection procedures, and teacher training materials; identification of study participants and written assurances of their participation; signed informed consent forms; input from stakeholders, and revisions as needed to the model interventions, methods, procedures and materials resulting from the pilot test.

Phase II (year two of the project): Full, systematic implementation of the interventions under ideal circumstances, with measurement of fidelity of the treatment, and teacher training and monitoring visits.

Phase III (years three – five of the project): Evaluation of the impact of the interventions on student outcomes in terms of oracy and literacy development, data analysis, and report writing.

All applicants are expected to propose at least one year of baseline data and at least two years of impact data, with sufficient sample sizes to detect educationally significant effects. Applicants must specify in detail what activities will be conducted in each year of the grant.

The evaluation must be carried out in school settings. Applicants must develop relationships with schools that will support the proposed model implementation and evaluation, and document that relationship in a detailed letter of support from the education organization(s).

Investigators must employ random assignment in the evaluation design. A school district or school that is to be a site for one of the program models must agree to cooperate fully with the random assignment as a condition for the applicant to receive an award. To facilitate random assignment, IES encourages applicants to consider the use of incentives for schools. They may include, but are not limited to: compensation for additional staff time required to cooperate with the research effort; provision of additional resources to enable a program to conduct new activities; securing vehicles for transportation; and stipends to families.

Applicants must provide a convincing rationale for the interventions being likely to improve children's outcomes compared with the practices used in the control or comparison conditions. In this regard, IES requires a reasonable assumption that children in the intervention classrooms will experience neutral to positive outcomes — rather than negative outcomes — compared with children in the control classrooms.

In the application, the applicant must:

- 1) Provide theoretical and empirical evidence to support the potential effectiveness of the model interventions, with particular reference to student achievement in oracy and literacy;
- 2) Provide clear and complete descriptions of each of the conditions;
- 3) Explain procedures for assignment of participants to conditions and discuss procedures for tracking fidelity to the assignment and potential sources of contamination;

- 4) Explain the logic of sampling so as to capture, to the degree possible, diversity in the school population to be studied. Core variables an applicant should consider for capturing diversity include: race or ethnicity status; gender; language status; parental education, household income. Applicants are encouraged to include substantial numbers of students who typically show low levels of English proficiency, or who have limited access to challenging and high quality literacy instruction and coursework;
- 5) Provide a letter of cooperation from participating schools for the purposes of conducting the research. In the letter of cooperation, representatives of the school would have to clearly indicate and accept the responsibilities associated with participating in the study. These responsibilities must include (1) agreement to provide a sufficient number of sites and classrooms to participate in the study and (2) agreement to the random assignment of children or classrooms to the model language intervention being evaluated versus a comparison approach;
- 6) Include, at a minimum, measures of the following child-level dependent variables: (a) oracy, (b) vocabulary, (c) literacy, and (d) comprehension;
- 7) Address the importance of measuring covariates by including, at a minimum, measures of (a) oral language environment in the classroom, (b) teacher knowledge of instructional methods (e.g., explains the meaning of words to children, reinforces increasing complex syntactical structure), (c) amount and quality of language use in the classroom (e.g., complexity of syntax), (d) presence of older sibling in the home, (e) student nonverbal IQ, (f) student cognition, (g) home and community use of language, and (h) level of teacher language proficiency;
- 8) Provide an on-site coordinator to manage all aspects of data collection, teacher training and program model implementation;
- 9) Include teacher training as a necessary component of the model intervention, and address the issue of uniformity in teacher quality and teacher training to implement the interventions;
- 10) Include fidelity checks inherent in the model interventions;
- 11) Address differential attrition;
- 12) Include advocates and stakeholder groups in verification of the model approaches;
- 13) Address the issue of contamination within schools, e.g., teachers talking, family variables, older sibling talking in English, children tutored outside of school, and how it can be minimized;
- 14) Include implementation visits;
- 15) Define critical terms, e.g., English proficiency; and
- 16) Include plans for collaborating with other grantees funded under this competition on the development of the two program models, and on development of study measures and data collection instruments.

Applicants must also:

- (a) Be prepared to collaborate with Institute staff in the development of the human subjects protocol and to have approval from the applicant's Institutional Review Board for conducting the proposed research at the time the award is made;

- (b) Be prepared to obtain informed consent of parents of children participating in the study, and of all teachers and other administrators from whom data will be collected in a timely fashion; and
- (c) Be prepared to provide all necessary materials and professional development to teachers and staff to implement the program models.

#### Applications Available

Application forms and instructions for the electronic submission of applications will be available for this program of research no later than February 21, 2003, from the following web site:

<http://ies.asciences.com>

#### Mechanism of Support

The Institute intends to award grants in the form of *cooperative agreements* for 60 months pursuant to this request for applications. A cooperative agreement mechanism allows substantial Federal involvement in the activities undertaken with Federal financial support. The specific responsibilities of the Federal staff and project staff will be identified and agreed upon prior to the award of the cooperative agreement.

#### Funding Available

The Institute may award up to 3 grants (cooperative agreements) as a result of this competition. The typical award will be approximately \$ 1,315,000 per year for 5 years, for a large sample size and experimental examination of the effects of variations in the interventions and implementation. However, larger budgets will be considered if a compelling case can be made for such support. The actual amount of the award will be contingent upon the specific study design proposed. Although the plans of the Institute include these evaluation projects, awards pursuant to this request for applications are contingent upon the availability of funds and the receipt of a sufficient number of meritorious applications.

#### Eligible Applicants

Applicants that have the ability and capacity to conduct scientifically valid research are eligible to apply. Eligible applicants include, but are not limited to, non-profit and for-profit organizations and public and private agencies and institutions, such as colleges and universities.

#### Special Requirements

Applicants should budget for two meetings each year in Washington, DC, with other grantees and Institute staff.

#### Letter of Intent

A letter indicating a potential applicant's intent to submit an application is optional, but encouraged, for each application. The letter of intent is to be sent by the date listed at the beginning of this document and should indicate -- in the email subject line -- the title of the program of evaluation covered by this request for applications and the number of the request. The title and number of this request for applications are also specified at the beginning of this document. Receipt of the letter of intent will be acknowledged by e-mail.

The letter of intent should not exceed one page in length and should include a descriptive title and brief description of the evaluation project; the name, institutional affiliation, address, telephone number and e-mail address of the principal investigator(s); and the name and institutional affiliation of any key collaborators. The letter of intent should indicate the duration of the proposed project and provide an estimated budget request by year, and a total budget request. Although the letter of intent is optional, is not binding, and does not enter into the review of subsequent applications, the information that it contains allows Institute staff to estimate the potential workload to plan the review. The letter of intent should be submitted by e-mail to:

[IES-LOI@asciences.com](mailto:IES-LOI@asciences.com)

### Submitting an Application

Applications must be submitted electronically by the application receipt date, using the ED standard forms and the instructions provided at the following web site:

<http://ies.asciences.com>

Potential applicants should check this site as soon as possible after February 21, 2003, when application forms and instructions first become available, for information about the electronic submission procedures that must be followed and the software that will be required.

The application form approved for this program is OMB Number 1890-0009.

### Contents and Page Limits of Application

The application must include the following sections: (1) title page form (ED 424); (2) budget summary form (ED 524); (3) one-page abstract; (4) research narrative; (5) references; (6) curriculum vitae for principal investigator(s) and other key personnel (limited to 3 pages each and including only information sufficient to demonstrate that personnel possess training and expertise commensurate with their duties); (7) narrative budget justification; and (8) appendix.

The one-page *abstract* must include: The title of the project and brief descriptions of (1) the purpose of the project or the educational problem that will be addressed; (2) the population(s) from which the participants of the study will be sampled (age groups, race/ethnicity, SES); (3) the proposed research method(s); and (4) the proposed intervention.

Incorporating the requirements outlined under the section on Requirements of the Proposed Research, the *research narrative* provides the majority of the information on which reviewers will evaluate the proposal and should address:

(a) Significance of the Project

- (1) Identify the educational problem that will be addressed by the study and describe the contribution the study will make to a solution to that problem.

(b) Approach

- (1) Provide a theoretical framework and review relevant prior empirical evidence supporting the proposed project, including a description of the interventions along with the conceptual rationale and empirical evidence supporting the interventions;
- (2) Include clear, concise hypotheses or research questions;
- (3) Present a clear description of, and a rationale for, the sample or study participants, including justification for exclusion and inclusion criteria and, where groups or conditions are involved, strategies for assigning participants to groups;
- (4) Provide clear descriptions of, and rationales for, data collection procedures and measures to be used; and
- (5) Present a detailed data analysis plan that justifies and explains the selected analytic strategy, shows clearly how the measures and analyses relate to the hypotheses or evaluation questions, and indicates how the results will be interpreted. The study must include a power analysis to provide some assurance that the sample is of sufficient size.

(c) Personnel

- (1) Include brief descriptions of the qualifications of key personnel (information on personnel should also be provided in their vitae). Key personnel must demonstrate experience in research design and random assignment, bilingual education and English-language acquisition, curriculum, reading, and capability of acquiring school cooperation.

(d) Resources

- (1) Provide a description of the resources available to support the project at the applicant's institution and in the field settings in which the research will be conducted.

The research narrative (text plus all figures, charts, tables, and diagrams) is limited to the equivalent of 25 pages, where a "page" is 8.5 in. x 11 in., on one side only, with 1-inch margins at the top, bottom, and both sides. Double space (no more than 3 lines per vertical inch) all text in the evaluation narrative. Use a font that is either 12-point or larger, or no smaller than 10 pitch (i.e., 10 characters per inch).

The 25-page limit does not apply to the title page form, the one-page abstract, the budget summary form and narrative budget justification, the curriculum vitae, references, or the assurances and certifications.

Reviewers are able to conduct the highest quality review when applications are concise and easy to read, with pages numbered consecutively.

The *budget justification* must provide sufficient detail to allow reviewers to judge whether reasonable costs have been attributed to the project. It must include the time commitments and brief descriptions of the responsibilities of key personnel.

The *appendix* must include letters of agreement from all partners (e.g., schools) and consultants. Each letter should include enough information to make it clear that the author of the letter understands the nature of the commitment of time, space, and resources to the evaluation project that will be required if the application is funded. The appendix is limited to 15 pages.

### Application Processing

Applications must be received by 11:59 p.m. Eastern time on the application receipt date listed in the heading of this request for applications. Upon receipt, each application will be reviewed for completeness and for responsiveness to this request for applications. Incomplete applications and applications that do not address specific requirements of this request will be returned to the applicants without further consideration.

### Peer Review Process

Applications that are complete and responsive to this request will be evaluated for scientific and technical merit. Reviews will be conducted in accordance with the review criteria stated below.

Each application will be assigned to at least two primary reviewers who will complete written evaluations of the application, identifying strengths and weaknesses related to each of the review criteria. Primary reviewers will independently assign a score for each criterion, as well as an overall score, for each application they review. Based on the overall scores assigned by primary reviewers, an average overall score for each application will be calculated and a preliminary rank order of applications prepared before the full peer review panel convenes to complete the review of applications.

At the panel meeting, all applications that were reviewed by primary reviewers will be reviewed by a full panel of reviewers who have substantive and methodological expertise appropriate to the evaluation and request for applications, and who served as primary reviewers for individual applications.

All members of the peer review panel will be expected to review all of the applications being considered by the panel. Following presentations by the primary reviewers and discussion by the full panel, each member of the peer review panel will score each application, assigning a score for each criterion, as well as an overall score. In addition, reviewers will indicate whether or not an application is recommended for funding.

### Review Criteria

The goal of Institute-supported research is to contribute to the solution of educational problems and to provide reliable information about the educational practices that support learning and improve academic achievement and access to educational opportunities for all students.

Reviewers will be expected to assess the following aspects of any application in order to judge the likelihood that the proposed research will have a substantial impact on the pursuit of that goal. Information pertinent to each of these criteria is also described above in the section on Requirements of the Proposed Research and in the description of the research narrative, which appears in the section on Contents and Page Limits of Application.

- Significance (importance of the addressed problem, contribution of project to solution of the problem)
- Approach (conceptual rationale, hypotheses or evaluation questions, measures, research design, analytic methods)
- Personnel (qualifications of project staff)
- Resources (support at applicant's institution and at field settings)

Strong applications for the English Language Acquisition Evaluation Grant must clearly address each of the review criteria. They make a well-reasoned and compelling case for the significance of the project and the problems or issues that will be the subject of the proposed research. They present a research design (approach) that is complete, and clearly delineated, and that incorporates sound research methods. In addition, the personnel descriptions included in strong applications make it apparent that the project director, principal investigator, and other key personnel possess training and experience commensurate with their duties. Descriptions of facilities, equipment, supplies, and other resources demonstrate that they are adequate to support the proposed activities. Commitments of each partner show support for the implementation and success of the project.

#### Receipt and Review Schedule

Letter of Intent Receipt Date: March 6, 2003

Application Receipt Date: April 25, 2003

Peer Review Date: June 26-27, 2003

Earliest Anticipated Start Date: September 30, 2003

#### Award Decisions

The following will be considered in making award decisions:

- Scientific merit as determined by the peer review
- Responsiveness to the requirements of this request
- Performance and use of funds under a previous Federal award
- Contribution to the overall program of research described in this request
- Availability of funds

Direct your questions to:

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PROGRAM AUTHORITY: 20 U.S.C. 9501 et seq., the “Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002,” Title I of Public Law 107-279, November 5, 2002. This program is not subject to the intergovernmental review requirements of Executive Order 12372.

APPLICABLE REGULATIONS: The Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR) in 34 CFR parts 74, 77, 80, 81, 82, 85, 86 (part 86 applies only to Institutions of Higher Education), 97, 98, and 99. In addition, 34 CFR part 75 is applicable, except for the provisions in 34 CFR 75.100, 75.102, 75.103, 75.105, 75.109(a), 75.200, 75.201, 75.209, 75.210, 75.217, 75.219, 75.220, and 75.230.